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BEHIND THE ANGLO-SOVIET TENSION

By William Henry Chamberlin

Concealment of the increasing strain in Anglo-Russian relations, so long and so unwisely attempted, has now become impossible.

Since Winston Churchill spoke out on the subject, at Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, the picture has moved from bad to worse with appalling rapidity. Any objective appraisal of the situation should now consider not only the immediate danger spots, as outlined in the day's headlines, but also the less well-understood background of current difficulties. For the roots of the present tension lie deep in the pages of history, and long antedate the rivalry of Communism and Capitalism.

Tension does not necessarily mean open conflict. The British and Russian Governments were on distinctly bad terms during a large part of the Nineteenth Century. Yet the Crimean War was then the only outright clash between them. And this was a war into which the two combatants blundered and stumbled, rather than a case of clear, planned aggression on either side. Now the costs of war have become many times more fearful; a grim fact which certainly has not escaped the consciousness of Russian and British leaders. Some of the issues that seem irreconcilable today may become blunted by time, or compromise, or intelligent mediation.

But from the moment when power politics replaced the Atlantic Charter as the determining factor in the peace, from the moment when the victorious Great Powers commenced to carve the world into spheres of influence, Anglo-Russian diplomatic antagonism became an unavoidable certainty, which could not be conjured away by any magic formulas in the shape of twenty-year or fifty-year alliances. An experienced student of history recently remarked to me that he knew of no instance when two "allies" had assailed each other with so much vigor, vim and consistency as the Soviet and British spokesmen showed at the initial meetings of the allegedly United Nations.

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II

Russia and Great Britain face each other across a long political frontier, extending from Hamburg to Basra. They are at cross-purposes as to policy toward shattered Germany; as to the future of Greece, Turkey and Iran; as to North Africa and Asiatic colonial questions; and as to such concrete issues as the fate of the Polish Army which has been preserved in Italy.

There is everywhere apparent the dynamic pressure of a compact totalitarian land empire, seeking to realize and surpass some of the goals of Czarist imperialism, against an old-established political system, part empire and part commonwealth, which depends on sea and air power to hold its far-flung territories together. And as evidence that a tension now acute has also been chronic, one finds a long historical record and certain unalterable facts of geography.

In the Sixteenth Century, at the time of Queen Elizabeth and Ivan the Terrible, there was contact between England, a small island kingdom, and Russia, a landlocked semi-Asiatic State. Even in that remote period a certain ideological rift was reflected in correspondence between the Czar and the Queen.

Ivan wanted to conclude an offensive and defensive alliance, including the right of either ruler to seek asylum in the territory of the other if driven from the throne by some domestic upheaval. Elizabeth sidestepped the proposal with a polite reference to the necessity of consulting her Parliament. Ivan poured out the vials of his wrath and scorn on a ruler so mean-spirited that she had to consider the opinion of her subjects. The 98 to 99 per cent majority of the ruling party in the recent Soviet election is merely a streamlined modern expression of the traditional Russian absolutism.

III

Although no close political ties developed between Great Britain and Russia, commercial interests gradually helped to draw the two countries together. England needed Russian timber and pitch for its navy and merchant marine and also exchanged its manufactured goods and colonial products, such as sugar and tobacco, for Russian flax, leather and, in the pre-industrial era, for iron.

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The period of French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars led to closer political association. England and Russia possessed a common interest in preventing French domination of the European Continent. To be sure, Czar Alexander I concluded an agreement with Napoleon at Tilsit (July 7, 1807) which might be considered a historical parallel to the Stalin-Hitler pact of August, 1939. Napoleon also anticipated Hitler by tearing up the pact in 1812, and Russia and England were prominent partners in the coalition which overthrew the Napoleonic empire.

But defeat of the Corsican military genius took all the cement out of the Anglo-Russian understanding. As J. A. R. Marriott says, in his excellent, scholarly work, The Eastern Question: A Study in European Diplomacy (Oxford, 1917):

> "Great Britain . . . was now deeply impressed with a sense of the danger to be apprehended whether from a French protectorate over Egypt or a Russian protectorate over Turkey. To repudiate the exclusive pretensions of both Russia and France was therefore the keynote of English foreign policy throughout three quarters of the nineteenth century."

The constant Russian desire -- motivated by sentimental, religious and economic considerations -- to gain control of Constantinople and to turn the Black Sea into a Russian lake was probably the main single concern of British Foreign Ministers from the fall of Napoleon until the emergence of united Germany as a naval rival. The steady march of Russian conquest in Central Asia up to the frontier of Afghanistan was viewed in London as a grave threat to India. The pages of Kipling are filled with references to the encroachments of "the bear that walks like a man".

In 1833, Czar Nicholas I, in whose footsteps Stalin is consciously or unconsciously following, seemed, by the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi, to have achieved Russia's objective of turning Turkey into a protected vassal state. But the masterful Palmerston succeeded in nullifying this treaty. Britain, in cooperation with France, fought the Crimean War on Turkey's behalf; and at the Congress of Berlin, in 1878, Disraeli was willing to risk another war to thwart Russian ambitions in the Balkans.

IV

Twice a militant Germany, first under Wilhelm II, then under Hitler, brought Great Britain and Russia into military and political cooperation. But temporary alliance never

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exorcised the underlying clash of national interest between a Russia suffering from a kind of landlocked claustrophobia, and pressing toward warm-water ports in the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, and a Britain intent on maintaining its lifelines of empire.

This clash is all the sharper now because no continental European Power is strong enough to play an independent cushioning or mediating role. Moreover, while old-fashioned nationalist and geo-political ambitions influence Soviet policy, it would be unrealistic to overlook the new dynamic weapon of international communism which is at Stalin's disposal.

Czarist Russia could never have counted on the blind devotion of the strongest political party in France. Nor would Czarist spies, on the prowl for foreign military secrets, have been able to enlist fanatical sympathizers, along with hired agents, among the nationals of other countries.

There are restraining influences on the Soviet thrust into the Near and Middle East. Russian losses in manpower and industrial equipment have exceeded those of Great Britain and have been far larger than those of the United States. Great naval power is still a dream of the Russian future. Soviet air power, judging from the experience of the war, is inferior to American and British. From Soviet-occupied countries one occasionally hears ominous rumblings which recall Marriott's judgment on the Russian occupation of Romania in the early Nineteenth Century:

> "Although the Russians had come as 'liberators', there is no period in their history to which the Romanians look back with greater bitterness."

The United States simply cannot avoid some form of involvement in the major Soviet-British clash. The whole atmosphere would be much less tense if America had not contributed, by its acquiescence in the Yalta and Potsdam decisions, to the wracking of the normal European state system. It remains to be seen whether there is sufficient American statesmanship to work out a formula which would satisfy legitimate Russian desires for security and equality of economic opportunity without letting down the bars to unlimited Soviet imperialist expansion.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. III - No. 11

By Frank C. Hanighen March 13, 1946

The grim fact which broods over the foreign situation today is Soviet superiority in immediately disposable military power. While the diplomatic duel goes on, our high command surveys its disintegrated Army and anxiously wonders if the battle of notes will reach the point where a showdown finds us sadly lacking in divisional strength.

Tension in the War Department is greater now than at any time since 1942. War Department concern is partly subjective. Generals have a too vivid memory of Pearl Harbor and possess the melancholy conviction that politicians always make the Army the goat when a disaster occurs. But many objective signs contribute to tension. Not only the Soviet reinforcements moving into Iran, but big concentrations in Bulgaria, opposite Turkey and Greece, cause alarm. Additionally, there is worry over Tito's 10 divisions facing Trieste, the gateway to Italy, and reports that large Soviet forces are gathered in Hungary.

Military leaders preserve the hope that diplomacy will prevent rash actions. But tough diplomatic words without the force to back them up hardly promote a feeling of confidence among the General Staff. And, always, military strategists must ask themselves the question: If I were Stalin, wouldn't I clean up while I had both superiority and opportunity? While the answer is keenly debated pro and con, military leaders are taking all possible -- and some startling -- precautions.

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An unpublicized order to General Mark Clark last week offered the first indication that the United States Government has not only dropped appeasement of Russia, but is prepared to translate brave words into action. The War Department, with the consent of Secretary of State Byrnes, ordered Clark to request the Russians, as well as the other Allies, to prepare immediately for evacuation of Austria as soon as physical preparations permit; and further directed Clark to cut off all UNRRA shipments to the Russian zone if the Russians refuse to evacuate. The results of this move are awaited with interest by Government circles.

It is believed that the Russians have scored off the State Department in the matter of Bulgaria. Diplomatic observers think that Russia is standing on the letter of the bond executed, carelessly by the Americans, during Byrnes' ill-fated trip to Moscow. Russian guile, and Byrnes' haste to return to the United States, resulted in an agreement so worded that American desire for survival of some semblance of democratic procedure in Bulgaria was jeopardized by the carelessness of the American delegation. As a result, Russia is making a good case of the alleged American violation of the Moscow agreements.

Perhaps the most important developments of the past week were the two signs of a united Anglo-American diplomatic front: (1) Britain openly supported the American stand against Russia in Manchuria. This is in contrast to the lack of accord in American and British attitudes toward Japan during the latter's invasion of Manchuria in 1931. (2) The United States joined Britain in rejecting the French request that the case against Franco be referred to the UNO Security Council. Hitherto, the State Department had apparently been more anxious for a change of government in Spain than was Britain. The rejection of the French demand represents a setback for Russian policy, which has indirectly but strongly -- via the French Communist Party -- been pushing for the early ousting of Franco; of course hoping the upheaval would place Spanish Communism in the saddle.

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If the American doctrine of intervention in the internal affairs of foreign countries has not passed its apogee, it should have, say observers here. The tripartite -- British-French-American -- statement demanding the ousting of Franco has proved a boomerang, and Franco seems to have rallied many Spaniards, normally against him, to his support. Don Juan of Bourbon, Pretender to the Spanish throne, who is hoping to unseat Franco, was quick to perceive the blunder of the three governments and sought to keep his own following within Spain in line by denouncing the tripartite declaration as "intolerable foreign intervention".

The Braden policy towards Colonel Peron has apparently had similar results in Argentina. According to partial returns from the election, the Peron Labor Party has won and it seems certain that Peron will be President. Latin American observers noted that Peron, in his election campaign, exploited Braden's attacks on him in order to whip up sentiment against "foreign interference". George Sokolsky in his syndicated column put it forcefully: "Were I an Argentine, I should have voted for Peron, under all circumstances and no matter what my personal sentiments might have been, because a foreign country intervened in the internal affairs of my country and therefore attacked its independence. Were I a Spaniard, I should today support Franco to the hilt for the same reason."

The fact that the United States has supported Britain in its refusal to consider the Spanish matter in the UNO Security Council may indicate that the State Department is prepared to abandon intervention in Spain. There is as yet no sign that the Braden policy will be dropped. But if Peron is a winner, few doubt that a thorough reconsideration of our recent policy towards Argentina will be in the cards.

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The Army wishes complete control over all research in the field of atomic energy, according to reliable sources. Scientific and educational circles are very disturbed by this report, for they fear that, if the Army is successful in gaining this power, military intervention in all chemistry and physics research, and therefore control in private education, will follow.

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Despite the indictment of a number of Canadian officials as "fifth columnists" in the recent spy affair, the fact is that Canada is moving towards greater internal unity than ever before. Conscription of French Canadians in World War I was a burning issue and, during most of World War II, the Government did not dare to conscript Canadians for service abroad. But, with the conflict between Soviet Russia and the Vatican to the fore, many observers believe that the French Canadians can be counted on to support defense measures which they formerly opposed.

This is but one symptom of a great drawing together of all forces in North America in the interests of common defense. Much has been made of the personal relationship between Premier King and President Roosevelt, but actually it was the declining power of the British Empire, and the increasing inability of Britain to protect Canada, that brought the Dominion closer to the United States.

Premier Drew of Ontario revealed some of Canadian officialdom's fears in a speech on March 9: "Although it [the Canadian uranium area] is a long way inside Canada, it is about three hours flying time from the nearest Russian airfield. . . . You can be perfectly sure that there are operation plans in the files of the Russian General Staff which contemplate the possible occupation of that relatively uninhabited area by a sudden descent of airborne troops."

No wonder, then, that the Canadian Government has announced a sharp increase in the size of her peace-time Army and Air Force. Before World War II, Canada had about 4,000 regular Army troops of all ranks and about the same number in the Air Force. Today,

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Canada has authorized a regular Army of 25,000 and a regular Air Force of 16,000. The militia, 85,000 in 1938, will now be raised to 189,000. In the official releases, it is noted that prominence is given to duties in the Northwest Territory and on the Yukon radio system. It is believed that the United States is giving financial as well as technical assistance to Canada for Arctic rearmament.

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If there has been any doubt that Mr. Winston Churchill does not speak for the Empire and the British Government, the scene at the Overseas Writers luncheon for the former Prime Minister, at the Hotel Statler in Washington, on March 8, should have dispelled such a notion. At the speaker's table, with Mr. Churchill, were a member of the Laborite Government, Sir Ben Smith; two British Ministers from the British Embassy, Mr. Harold Butler and Sir George Sansom; and the ranking diplomatic representatives from all of the British Dominions. The latter were the Canadian Ambassador, the Ministers of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

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The possibility of an open break between Soviet Russia and the Zionists is receiving no little attention. Experts on the Near East have noted increasing signs of Russian tenderness for the Arabs, friendliness towards Moslems and conspicuous lack of enthusiams for the Palestine Jews. Recently, a Jewish group in New York interviewed a Russian journalist as to the Soviet's attitude toward Palestine. He said, winking: "Well, there are 18 million Arabs in the Near East, and there are about 2 million Jews. After all, we Russians are realists." Now that the war with Nazi Germany is ended, the Kremlin may figure that it can afford loss of Jewish sympathy. The Russian leaders also probably realize that American Jews, except those who are Communists, would turn out to be loyal Americans in a Russian-American showdown.

Moscow, however, has not entirely written off Jewish sentiment. Friends of Russia have launched a drive to revive interest in that part of the Soviet Union known as Birobidjan, "Jewish Autonomous Region", located on the borders of Manchuria. A decade ago, much was heard of this development, but since then news has been scant. Experts on Russia have regarded it as a failure and say that Jews sent to Birobidjan found its poverty so intolerable that they fled in large numbers across the border to the comparative freedom and prosperity of Japanese-controlled Manchuria.

Today the drive to "put Birobidjan back in the news" has gotten under way with a half page advertisement in the New York Times (March 6), asking American "assistance", and promising that Birobidjan is not intended to compete with Palestine. A two-day meeting of the American Birobidjan Committee followed in New York (March 9-11), with speakers including Russian Consul General Kasaniev, New York Councilman Stanley Isaacs, and Senator Magnuson of Washington. It is reported that at least one American Jewish organization has protested against the Birobidjan propaganda on the ground that there has been no open immigration to that area and that Jews do not regard it as a "homeland".

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The latest black market wrinkle in the lumber industry -- as yet confined to the West. The wholesaler, unable to buy lumber at ceiling prices, takes an option to purchase a mill, the standard charge for this being $1,000 a week. By gentleman's agreement the option remains unexercised. But for its duration, the mill directs its output to the holder of the option at what appears to be approved charges. OPA doesn't know how to combat this subtle racket.

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Notes and Quotes

We present some interesting and varied European radio reactions to Mr. Churchill's Fulton speech. France. A radio press review includes the following: Le Pays -- "There is something amiss with this clarion call. Democracies are reaping today what yesterday's great men sowed at Yalta. . . . L'Ordre -- "It was said that an outburst of Slavism has always followed outbursts of Germanism. Churchill should admit this as an inevitable fact but he is none the less right in warning Stalin in the latter's own interest not to abuse the advantages now offered him by history."

Italy. Home Service: "The papers published Churchill's cries of alarm at the danger of a third war. He is an expert so far as wars are concerned. He saw World War II from afar -- indeed he helped somewhat to prepare it by his praise for Mussolini and Hitler. . . . As far as Italy is concerned she must try to avoid being dragged into a third war, poor and weaponless as she is. Perpetual neutrality on the Swiss or Swedish model is what she needs, since wars are won by those who do not wage them and those Nations flourish which keep their youth alive."

Madrid. "This time it is not we who raise the cry of alarm. . . . The warning was issued by Winston Churchill. His Fulton speech . . . contains with magnificent precision an outright accusation of the methods used by International Communism in its unadorned determination to enslave the world."

Warsaw. The highly censored radio station as usual tells the Poles only what their masters wish them to know: "According to a Washington report Churchill made a speech in which he said that peace could not be consolidated without a brotherly association of Anglo-Saxon nations. This association could eventually lead to common citizenship but such matters could be left to the more distant future. He emphasized his admiration for the valor of the Soviet nation and paid tribute to his wartime companion, Stalin. He also stressed the constant desire of the British people to maintain lasting and friendly relations with the USSR. The general tone of Churchill's speech indicates that he does not believe in a war in the near future and that all misunderstandings can be solved within the framework of the United Nations."

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Why have not the facts embodied in Alexander B. Maley's HUMAN EVENTS article, "The Epic of the German Underground", been officially made public? One answer to the question is offered in a letter from an American officer assigned to study the Underground movement and the persecution of Protestants and Catholics. An excerpt follows: "We were just ready to sift the statistical material of our findings when suddenly at the end of August (1945) there came an order from higher up to stop immediately all investigations of the German Underground and of the persecution by the Nazis of the churches. A further order was given to publish nothing whatsoever and to disband at once."

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We have in our possession a letter headed "Chinese Esperanto League", Chungking, China, addressed to "U.S.A. Comrades". After some paragraphs extolling the "democratic" Chinese Communists, and condemning the "fascists" (i.e., the Chinese Government) the letter requests, "Kindly make known to the U.S.A. people the true state of affairs in China and call to them to demand of their government a cessation of munitions provision to and a withdrawal of its troops from China." After this reiteration of the current party line, it ends with this exhortation: "We ask you to read this letter in Esperanto clubs and classes, publish it in Esperanto magazines." Apparently the Commie network misses no bet.

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